

Newsletter

Blissymbolics
Communication
Institute

March 1982 No. 26





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BLISSYMBOLICS COMMUNICATION INSTITUTE

The purpose of this Newsletter is to publish articles and news items concerning Blissymbolics which utilizes visual symbols as an augmentative to communication. The many applications of Blissymbolics include the following:

1. Communication Difficulties
2. Cognitive and Language Development
3. Reading
4. International Communication

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Newsletter, Bulletin and Resource Directory are available from the BCI for a combined yearly fee of \$30.00. Apply to:

Blissymbolics Communication Institute
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ARTICLES

Readers are encouraged to contribute letters and articles in order to share their symbol experiences. Write to:

BCI Newsletter
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FROM THE EDITOR

Overview:

R. Allan Currie has submitted two articles concerning the Victoria resource centre's Bliss Week '81 project. They contain many good ideas for public awareness programmes.

Betty and Ron Ferguson write to tell us about many wonderful experiences that resulted from their daughter, Wendy, appearing in the film "Breakthrough".

A Blissymbolics banner made for the Special Olympics was sent to us by Diane Eichelberger.

Physiotherapist, Lee Boysen, presents a case study on Terese, a ten year old severely involved child. Spectacular changes in personality occurred once Teresa obtained a means of communication.

Janice Light continues her discussion on Language Intervention with another thought-provoking article.

Symbol users from the Dr. William F. Roberts Hospital School and the Villa Hospital School contribute to symbol users' corner.

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Omission:

The last issue, #25 November 1981, contained an article written by Cathy Perlich concerning initial Blissymbolic lexicons. It is regretted that we failed to mention that said article formed part of an assignment prepared by Cathy for her studies at Purdue University and that the university had granted permission for its reproduction. We hope to hear from our readership about this controversial article - providing supportive or contrary evidence. Please write!

.....

Overseas News:

Bliss interns have been busy overseas. Pina Gennaro has conducted an elementary workshop at the Consorzio Siciliano Centro di Riabilitazione, Via V. Casagrandi 53, Catania, Italy. Blissymbolic information in Italian is available from Pina at the above address.

Ena Jenkins and Jill Jenkinson were sponsored by the British Council to conduct an elementary workshop organized at the Centro di Reabilitacao, Lisbon, Portugal. They also travelled to the King George VI Centre in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, to train 25 instructors.

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The next issue will be published in July 1982. Deadline for receipt of material is May 15, 1982.

Barbara Rush
Editor

LOU ALLMAN - SYMBOLS END THE GUESSING GAME

(Reproduced by kind permission of the Times-Colonist, Victoria, British Columbia. This article (and the competition that follows) was initiated by R. Alan Currie, Director of the B.C. Resource Centre, during Bliss Week, April 1981 - a public awareness project of the resource centre.....Ed.)

Three years ago Lou Allman had to play a guessing game with family and friends to communicate her simplest wants. Birth defects left her without normal body movements, able to turn her head, but unable to converse or even to point out her needs, except by eyeballing. Often, said her mother Margo, it was by intuition that those around her were able to satisfy the bright girl in the wheelchair despite her level of mental accomplishment. "Sometimes it took a while, and a lot of guessing, but usually she could get the message across", the mother said. "But now she can talk to a perfect stranger. It's like a miracle, really". "Bliss symbols are a wonderful thing. Anybody can talk to her, and she's a regular chatterbox".

Bliss symbols -- an international communication for the handicapped -- were invented by Charles Bliss, an Australian, seeking a universal written language. They have made a world of difference to the handicapped, children and adults alike, who are deprived of the conversation and social contact that normal people take for granted. This week is Bliss Week in Canada, enabling groups like the Greater Victoria Society for Alternative Communication to spread its message.

The society, known as Blissymbolics for short, has helped more than 100 people to communicate since it was established in 1976. It has 32 clients at present and its Director, R. Allan Currie, said its basic philosophy is to go where it is most needed -- Victor Street School, Keating Cross Road School, sheltered workshops like Sentinel; group homes, hospitals and individual homes.

Bliss symbols are an easily learned substitute for spoken language. They consist of pictographs, arbitrary symbols like numerals, ideographs and compound arrangements. In use, they represent people, things, actions, feelings, relationships and ideas. When displayed on a symbol board the English word or idea expressed always is shown at the top, enabling an unfamiliar person to follow the meaning of a handicapped person pointing to the symbols. "The public shouldn't hesitate when they see someone with a board because all symbols appear with the word", Currie said.

Even in more difficult cases, like Lou Allman, it becomes quite easy to converse, he said. Lou has a Bliss board covered with symbols attached to her wheelchair. It is divided like a checkerboard into sections by colour and number codes enabling her to look in sequence from one key to another, conveying words and phrases with her eyes alone.



Ian McKain photo

He remembered what it was like before she got her board. "She could move her eyes up and down or from side to side, and communication was confined to a form of Twenty Questions". "She couldn't initiate a request or ask a question or make a demand. Only her mother could understand her basic requests". Using the board, angled above her semi-reclining position, Lou now directs a look to one of the six sectors into which it is divided, signifies a colour and number of row and symbol. And she works fast, her eyes darting around the board.

"As Lou's method of accessing symbols involves four points, we do not insist on correct syntax for every message". Margo Allman said Lou had the advantage of being mentally alert. She attended Pearkes Centre for Children, learned math, the alphabet, social studies, how to spell and read and delighted in special workbooks with yes/no questions.

Lou, who is 27, has travelled a lot with her parents and other children in the family, and according to her mother, "had a good ear for sound". Sound is an important part of Lou's life, hearing people talk, listening to music -- of which she has a large record collection -- but she is not overly interested in T.V. She loves going on outings with Victoria Recreation for the Handicapped to community events, movies and discos. Getting out is the ideal result of Bliss communication. But the society does need reinforcement or support from teachers, care staff, families and the public.

Bliss Week gives an opportunity to acquaint people with the society's goals:

- Public information on what is done and what is offered to non-verbal individuals;
- Showing that understanding the symbols is not complicated;
- Encouraging membership and donations to further the work.

United Way has agreed to make a grant enabling the society to hire a co-ordinator to train volunteers. Lt. Governor Henry Bell-Irving has agreed to be a patron of the Bliss society. The Times-Colonist is helping to tell the story and is sponsoring a contest in which readers are invited to play as a means of becoming more familiar with the Bliss language. (See following article).

Sealand of the Pacific has donated prizes as an incentive to try working with the symbols. "We hope people will, through the contest, pay a bit more attention to the symbols", Currie said. Readers of all ages are invited to enter the contest, with the exception of teachers of, and others trained in, Blissymbolics.

BLISS COMPETITION - PUBLIC AWARENESS

From: R. Allan Currie
Victoria, B.C.

You might like to adapt the following competition for use in your area to expand the public's awareness and understanding of the Blissymbol system. This competition, accompanied by a feature length article, was carried by our local newspaper, Victoria Times-Colonist, during our Bliss Week '81 and proved to be a great success.

400 entries were received and the spin-off benefits included an offer from BC Ferries Corporation to underwrite the costs of a poster to be displayed on their fleet (12 million people use the system each year).

The advantages of a competition include

- a) A newspaper editor prefers to see a return for the space used in any public service article.
- b) The competition can run for several days and ensure continued exposure.
- c) It is simple, appealing and direct.

(The following is reproduced with permission from Times-Colonist)

Reference Display:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	hello 	person 	my, mine 	(to) be 	in, inside 	new 	house 	animal 	pen, pencil
2	please 	man 	woman 	(to) think 	out, outside 	silent 	bed 	fish 	book
3	thanks 	boy 	girl 	(to) want 	all 	difficult 	bus 	news 	mind
4	goodbye 	baby 	friend 	(to) love 	around 	funny 	truck 	television 	face
5	question 	family 	visitor 	(to) say, tell 	but, except 	happy 	bicycle 	radio 	mouth

This is a typical board which might be used by a non-verbal individual using symbols as an aid to communication. Cut it out because it has the symbols needed to complete the empty squares below.

Solution Grid:

1 my, mine 	2	3	4	5	6 my, mine 	7	8
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Steps to Solving Puzzle:

1. Cut out and save the two grids. The large one is your reference source. The smaller one is the solution board and has the hidden message to be completed.
2. Solve today's two clues and copy the correct symbols on to the appropriate squares on the solution board.
3. Wednesday and Thursday two new clues will appear.
4. When you have solved all the clues you will have eight symbols on the solution board which will form a typical message from a symbol user.
5. Please mail or drop off your completed solution board in an envelope to Bliss Crossword, Times-Colonist, Box 300, Victoria, B.C., V8W 2N4, by April 14, 1981. Print your name and address on the back of your entry.
6. The first five correct solutions drawn will win family season passes donated by Sealand of the Pacific.

Day 1:

The solution board has a hidden message from symbol users. To discover the message simply solve the following crossword-type clues using the large chart as your reference source. Two squares have been filled in to show the idea, i.e. numbers 1 and 6. The clue to solve these squares was: SOMETHING PERSONAL. The answer is 'MY' which is on C-1 on the large chart.

Today's clues for squares 2 and 3 are: #2 DENTISTS' MILIEU
#3 EXISTS

When you have solved the clues copy the symbols on to the appropriate squares on the solution board.

Day 2:

Here are today's clues in the Blissymbolics puzzle that started Tuesday in the Times-Colonist:

#4 NOISELESS
#5 EXCEPT

Day 3:

#7 IDEA CONTAINER
#8 ORATES

Later:

Here is the solution to the Blissymbolics contest:

1 my, mine 11+	2 mouth o	3 (to) be ^ o	4 silent -2	5 but, except -1	6 my, mine 11+	7 mind C	8 (to) say, tell ^ o
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Winners were the first five correct entries drawn by editorial assistant, Fran Litman, with the help of R. Allan Curries, director of the Greater Victoria Society for Alternative Communication. The winners are (names and addresses listed).

The contest was designed to focus attention on the novel international communication method for the disabled invented by Charles Bliss, an Australian. Children and adults deprived of the conversation and social contact that most people take for granted are making increasing use of the new language.

Bliss symbols are an easily-learned substitute for the spoken language, and there are 100 or so Victoria area citizens who benefit from Blissymbolics.

THE BREAKTHROUGH - IMPACT ON OUR LIVES

By: Betty & Ron Ferguson
Caledonia, Ontario

(The award-winning film "Breakthrough" was made in 1981 as a tribute to the International Year of Disabled Persons. It tells the story of three people who have cerebral palsy and use Blissymbolics to communicate. Wendy Ferguson, age eleven, was the youngest "star" and the production and distribution of this film had many consequences for her entire family. Rental information is available from Cinema Concepts International, 93 Scollard Street, Toronto, Ontario. M5R 1G4Ed.)

We've all heard the phrase - "What a difference a day makes - twenty-four little hours". As our family looks back over the last year, we have experienced so many "days" that have left their impact on us. We look back in disbelief that so much happened to our family as a result of our handicapped daughter Wendy. Let's go back to the Spring of 1980.

We were approached by Mrs. Barbara Rush, (Wendy's school teacher at the time) to see if we would submit to an interview by a company planning to make a film about handicapped people using Bliss boards. We readily agreed and Peter Williamson and Ira Levy, co-producers of the movie, came to our home, and at once we became friends. We shared our story and philosophy of life with them. At that time we weren't sure whether Wendy would be selected to "star" in the film or not.

It wasn't until September 1980 that we received a telephone call, from Ira Levy saying that Wendy would be in the film and could they set a date for the film crew to come to our home? What excitement for Wendy and our whole family. The first week of school, the film crew arrived at the Cerebral Palsy Centre and spent a whole day filming Wendy's activities, especially the portions with her using her Bliss board. How chaotic it was for the staff but they came through with flying colours.

The crew spent two whole days filming us at home, at church and at grandparents and the men were superb. They made it easy for Wendy to relax and for us to be ourselves. From September to late March, we didn't hear a word from the producers. But then the day arrived when we were to see "Breakthrough". Our emotions we certainly stirred as we watched the film and realized that we were having a small part in helping others learn and understand the non-verbal handicapped person. We met Mrs. Sue Odell that night, as well as reacquainting ourselves with Paul Marshall. These were the other "stars" in the movie and what an impact their lives have had on audiences that watch the film. We were all thrilled with the end result of Peter and Ira's work.

That was only the beginning as we were soon to realize. We were invited to the Toronto premiere showing in April at the O.C.C.C. at which time Ira and Peter said, "We'll see you in New York in May for the premiere showing at the United Nations". We laughed and said " IMPOSSIBLE! " We knew the cost was beyond our budget to fly the five of us to New York City, and we put the thought out of our minds. Within two weeks an official invitation arrived from the Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations requesting us to attend the premiere showing May 13th, 1981. What a flurry of excitement that caused. We had no funds but we all really wanted to go.

To make a long story short, our town people in Caledonia, raised \$3,300.00 in two days to pay for ground transportation and hotels and a private citizen in Hamilton donated to the Hamilton District Society for Crippled Children all the money needed to pay the airfare for the "stars" and their families. It was like a dream. Never had anything like this happened to us before. We were on the plane for New York City one week after the invitation arrived. Not so impossible!

The three day trip was one we'll never forget. It was the first time for all of us to fly and the Air Canada people were excellent to deal with in helping Wendy on and off the plane, as well as during the flight. We attended the premiere that same night we arrived and were thrilled at the response of people from many different countries. All were impressed with what Canada is doing for the non-verbal person, and the teachers were encouraged to keep working with their Bliss users.

The next two days we toured New York taking in the Barnum & Bailey Ringling Brothers Three-Ring Circus. Wendy was ecstatic. For three hours we were entertained by some of the greatest circus entertainers around.

The excitement has not slowed down all that much in the last few months. Our town library purchased the movie "Breakthrough" and loans it out to any group wanting to show it. We have been asked to attend many of the local showings and answer questions or speak. This has been fantastic because people right where we live are gaining a better understanding of Wendy - their little neighbour. We have met so many beautiful people because of the film and have heard nothing but good about it.

Our Town Council approved the building of four ramps at our main intersection and this was a direct result of all the publicity the movie created, as well as a result of a special request made by us.

The leftover funds collected for our trip to New York would not be taken back by the Chamber of Commerce and the Kinsmen. They insisted we start a wheelchair van fund and to this we could hardly find the words to say "thanks".

Has there been a difference as a result of the movie? Yes - a hundred times yes! Wendy has always had a valuable input into our lives and now we can share that valuable input with others around the world who view the movie. Never did we dream we would go on an expense-paid trip to New York because of her - but we did! And we have been quick to tell her how special she is and how much we appreciate her contribution to our lives. We have committed ourselves to go when asked and share the movie with others and we look forward to whatever the future holds for "Breakthrough" and Blissymbolics.

BLISS BANNER

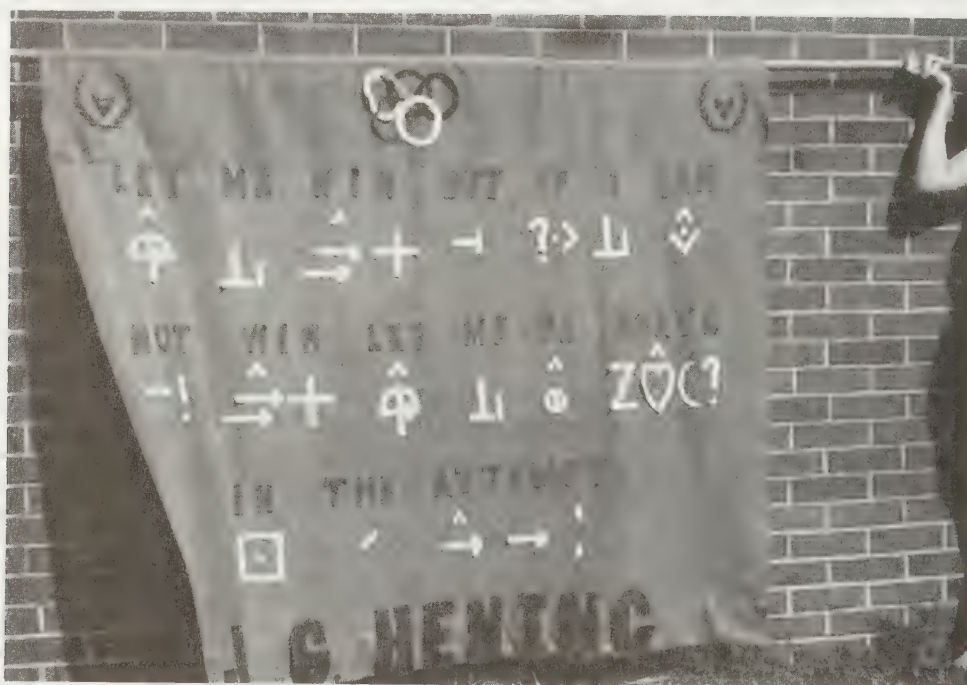
By: Diane Eichelberger
Chesterfield, Virginia

(Diane is a speech pathologist and introduced Blissymbolics to the non-verbal students at Hening School)

The communicatively handicapped students at Hening Elementary School, Chesterfield County, Virginia, helped assemble a banner for the Special Olympics held in the Spring of 1981. The banner was designed by one of the teachers of the trainable mentally retarded section. It is based on the Special Olympics motto: Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt. The significant element, however, is that it also utilizes Blissymbols. The logo for the International Year of the Disabled is also incorporated. The banner won second place in the banner competition.

Another significant factor is that Blissymbols have been in use at Hening School for only one school year, that of 1980 - 1981. They have been applied broadly from preschool classes to various age ranges of the trainable mentally retarded students. Those utilizing Blissymbols are severely dysarthric, apraxic or have cerebral palsy. Blissymbols have been accepted by the students, teachers and parents. Previously non-communicative students are now expressing simple needs to complex thoughts.

The first year of Blissymbols was challenging and exciting. Each new year will bring even greater satisfaction for those now able to communicate and others who can now understand.



Note: The Blissymbols represented on the banner have been hand-drawn. They deviate in some details from the standard form of the symbols as presented in Blissymbols For Use, B. Hehner, ed. Blissymbolics Communication Institute, Toronto, 1980.....Ed.

TERESA - CASE STUDY

By: Lee Boysen, RPT
Forrest Park School
Florida

Teresa is almost ten years old. She is diagnosed as having mixed spastic / athetoid cerebral palsy. Teresa's story, like many severely involved children's, is one of frustration: frustration for Teresa, her family, her friends, her teachers, therapists and physicians. In spite of years of treatment, a brain pacemaker and Teresa's own persistence, her severe physical involvement prevents her from sitting without support, from feeding herself and from communicating her needs, thoughts, hopes and fears.

At age two Teresa began speech, occupational and physical therapy. Throughout her therapies a number of goals have persisted. The first goal was to try to attain better muscle tone - to balance the spastic and athetoid components which so markedly interfere with any active motion. Control of her body under the alternate involuntary contraction/relaxation of muscles was and is extremely difficult, unreliable and tiring. A second goal was attempted to inhibit persistent primitive reflexes. For example, Teresa exhibits a dominating or obligatory asymmetrical tonic reflex (which causes her to assume a "fencing" position). This reflex prevents Teresa from functionally bringing her hands to the midline and co-ordinating her eyes and hands across the midline of her body.

Thirdly, therapies worked on developmental skills such as rolling, head control, sitting, feeding and so forth. Concurrently with developmental activities, attempts were made to establish balance and protective responses to protect her head and face if she began to fall. In 1977 Teresa had a chronic cerebellar stimulator (a brain pacemaker) implanted. The pacemaker resulted mainly in some inhibition of Teresa's spasticity which in turn allowed the athetoid components to be expressed more strongly. Teresa's upper extremity motor development improved 6.5 months (at about 5 years of age) to 16.3 months at age 8. Her posture and locomotion motor development is about 5 months. Both low scores reflect her persistent reflex problems, her fluctuating tone and her lack of balance or protective responses. The scores also show that Teresa is unable to sit and use her hands well.

Positioning Teresa continues to revolve around control of her hips, feet and trunk. In the past a poly-propelane TLSO was used, but caused skin problems and was discontinued. She now has a seat insert which she uses at school for stability. The reason for use of this type of positioning device was to provide a firm, stable base from which to use her arms and hands for communication. Speech therapy which also began at an early age, dealt with feeding and prespeech activities. As Teresa matured her speech program was directed toward speech drills and language development.

In the spring of 1978 Teresa was evaluated for placement in the Bliss program. She was accepted in the program and began her communication training. Because of her limited hand use finding the correct equipment was of primary concern. In September of 1978 Teresa entered Sandra's classroom. Her intelligence has been estimated to be at least within "normal" limits. No formal testing had been attempted prior to 1978 partially because her communication skills were limited to "yes" "no" signals and tears or smiles.

The first symbols were placed in a portable plastic folder that could be placed on a table in the classroom. Teresa had little trouble learning the first 100 symbols. They were easily distinguished from one another and her communication was one word expressions. Can you imagine Teresa's delight the first time she was actually able to answer her teacher's question "what do you like to do?" Teresa pointed to "wash" on her board, then to her head. She said she liked having her hair washed!

Several reasons made a lapboard necessary. First, it provided a stable base on which to point, and secondly size of the display required more room. The first tray was too flat and Teresa could not easily reach the symbols in the top rows; it slid off the chair arms; and the acetate film used to cover the display was not satisfactory. On returning from a Trace workshop, Mrs. Banton and Mrs. Osborn brought back new ideas for a second laptray. Hinging lexan cover to the board to protect the display, providing an elevating feature to bring the top rows within reach, and attaching velcro straps solved the problems of the first laptray. Teresa became the first student to use a 400 symbol display specifically tailored to her vocabulary, her needs, her likes and her dislikes.

Teresa originally had no trouble learning symbols, but as the number of symbols increased and the differences between similar symbols became minute she had more difficulty in discriminating between symbols. Strategies were modified to give Teresa more drills in visual discrimination and more practice with new symbol presentations.

Following her Bliss experiences Teresa's visual perception skills have shown improvement, especially in visual memory, visual closure and figure ground. However, she still has moderately severe perceptual problems. On part of the Ayers Battery, Teresa still scored from 3 to 4.5 standard deviations below the mean! She still receives drill on perceptual tasks. She will improve in her skills, but obviously it will not be easy.

Teresa began Bliss with inner language, but without language syntax organized and ready to transfer to symbols. She continues to work hard on structure and is now communicating in complex abstract multiword sentences.

Teresa has used several methods of pointing. She began using a pencil with erasers on each end, changed to a T bar pointer, her elbow and her fingers. The latest aid to Teresa on her board, was to drill the lexan to provide a hole over each symbol. Teresa can "hook" her finger into the hole.

Teresa has begun using the Express I communicator. She is learning to operate a variety of switches, and is being taught strategies to deal with her perceptual and motor planning problems as she attempts to direct select a symbol.

The change in Teresa has been spectacular. Prior to Blissymbols, Teresa was a frustrated, whining, stubborn and often unhappy student. Today, for the most part she is outgoing, more confident and usually a cheerful young lady. She can express her joy, her anger and her inner thoughts for anyone who will take the time to talk with her.

LANGUAGE INTERVENTION FOR NONVOCAL CHILDREN : PRAGMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

PART II

By: Janice C. Light
Ottawa, Ontario

The first part of this article (November, 1981) dealt with the theory underlying language intervention programs for nonvocal children. The section concluded that our programs must encourage the children to develop the semantic (content), syntactic (form), and pragmatic (use) aspects of their language. Communicative interaction must be the principal goal of our programs. This second section shall address the practical considerations of implementing these theoretical goals in daily situations at home and in the classroom.

If we stand back for a moment and observe ourselves and others interacting with our nonvocal children, listen to our conversation, watch our body posture and eye gaze, we find, sadly, that the communicative pattern is overwhelmingly dominated by the mediator (parent, teacher, teacher's aide or caregiver). The mediator initiates most interaction and does most of the "talking". The mediator and child establish a pattern of interaction, whereby the mediator directs and controls the behaviour of the child, through commands, demands and requests, without expecting or inviting verbal (symbol, sign or spoken) response from the child.

How many of us have heard ourselves or others with nonvocal children, asking questions and then responding to them with barely a pause for the child to react (What do you want? A cookie? Pudding? Here you go.); or asking repetitive, dead-end questions, to which we already know the answer and regarding which the child knows that we know the answer (What's this? Book. Show me the book.). How many of us have heard ourselves or others responding to the child's communicative attempts with nondirected praise (Good girl! Good talking!). In all these cases, we, as mediators, have undercut the basic premises of communication. We fail to recognize the child's pragmatic intent, we fail to expect, encourage or allow the child's response. In effect, we do not encourage communicative interaction; we terminate dialogue.

Typically, the nonvocal child is locked into the role of language receiver, a nonparticipant in communicative interaction. We, as mediators, define the constraints of interaction. What communicative functions do we allow the child to develop within these constraints? Typically the repertoire of functions is severely limited. It is our responsibility, as mediators, to lift the constraints on interaction and to facilitate the child's development of a full range of communicative functions.

Language learning occurs at all times and in all situations; it is not restricted to structured "language" or vocabulary sessions in the classroom. Observe your child in daily activities and note what she/he communicates about (food, toys, play, swimming); with whom (parent, teacher, peer); when (at school, mealtimes, playground); how (with gesture, vocalizations, body posture, eye gaze, symbols); why (to obtain an object, request assistance, express feelings).

Typically the nonvocal child has developed manifold, creative means to convey intent - behaviour, differentiated vocalizations, gestures, eye gaze, posture, movement. Some of these means may be efficient and effective conveyors of information, universally understood - a head nod for "yes", head shake for "no", shoulder shrug and raised eyebrows for "I don't know". If the child is conveying intent effectively and appropriately in a situation, there is no need for intervention at that point. Invariably, however, the child also uses means to communicate which are inappropriate (disruptive behaviour, tugging and pulling), or not easily interpreted except by a very restricted audience (idiosyncratic gestures, vocalizations). It is in the latter situations that language intervention is warranted. The starting point of any communication program should be those situations in which the child is motivated to communicate, but is ineffective or frustrated in doing so.

Halliday (1975) posits that instrumentals (expressions of needs and wants) and regulatives (attempts to influence the actions of others) are the first communicative intents acquired by the normally developing child. As such, they are excellent starting points for any communication program.

Determine what motivates the child (favourite toys, activities, food) and develop opportunities for the child to communicate about these desires. It may be necessary to modify the environment (removing favourite toys from reach, unplugging the TV or tape recorder, "forgetting" lunchtime). Then wait. We have an inordinate fear of silent waiting and yet it proves time and again, to be an exceedingly effective strategy to prompt communicative interaction. When your child does initiate interaction, in whatever manner (gesture, vocalization, eye gaze), respond. Expand or extend your child's communication. If your child gestures or points, introduce the symbol for the situation and model the appropriate response. If your child uses a single symbol (car) and the meaning is vague, model a more complete and more effective response (Go car. Play car. Car broken.). Remember, however, that in some situations a single word or short phrase may be the most effective and appropriate communicator:

How are you? Fine, thanks.

What do you want? Cookie, please.

In pursuance of more complex sentence structure, we have too often sacrificed clear, effective and efficient communication of intent. Allow your child to experience the natural reinforcement of communication (receiving the requested item). Allow your child the experience of causing and controlling within the environment.

As your child becomes more proficient, increase your expectations. Up the ante and, most importantly, yield the balance of the communicative interaction to the child.

Once the initial pragmatic intents (expressing needs and wants, influencing the actions of others) are established, it is time to develop the other elements of dialogue - conveying information, expressing feelings, requesting information. These communicative intents have their origins in early parent (mediator)/child interactions, involving joint attention and action. Informal, open-ended play situations provide excellent opportunities to share a "topic" of action and, hence, a "topic" of conversation. Turn-taking activities with toys (rolling balls, piling blocks, using computer toys, playing musical instruments)¹ are the precursors of turn-taking interactions in conversation.

Talk to your child in these situations, using the appropriate symbols. Don't question or command continually, simply comment on your activities or your child's. Wait. Allow your child the opportunity to interact. Confirm his/her response and expand on it. If the response is nonverbal (gesture, posture, eye gaze), model the appropriate verbal (symbol, sign, spoken) response. If the response is verbal, extend it. Remember that normal conversational dialogue is not stereotyped and repetitive; it develops the topic. Effective communication ought to result in more interaction, not less.

As your child begins to develop communicative skills, encourage him/her to interact with a varied audience. Perhaps your child can run errands or convey messages to other people. Allow your child the opportunity and experience of initiating interaction, of gauging the listener's understanding and of conveying the message accordingly. It is only through active participation in communicative interaction, that the nonvocal child learns to be an effective communicator.

Too often, we expect the nonvocal child to develop skills in the role of "speaker" (to learn to assess the listener's level of comprehension and to adapt accordingly, to perceive and interpret verbal and nonverbal cues from the listener, to initiate topics and maintain them, to pass turns), and yet we seldom allow the child the opportunity to "speak". We expect the child to become effective in the role of listener (to use verbal and nonverbal feedback to cue the speaker, to take turns in interaction, to request clarification), and yet we often fail to allow the child the opportunity to provide feedback in conversational exchange.

Blissymbols provide many nonvocal children with a means to communicate, but they do not ensure communicative interaction. It is our responsibility to ensure that our children have the experiences to form the content of communication, that they are motivated and have experienced the reinforcement that is intrinsic to successful communication, that they have the opportunity (time and space) to "speak" and to listen, that they have the syntactic skills necessary to convey their intent, that they have a clear understanding of the basic postulates of conversation (turn-taking, topic maintenance, etc.), and that they have access to a wide range of people with whom to communicate. It is not enough that our nonvocal children develop the form and content of language (symbols); they must also have the opportunity to use symbols in daily communicative interaction.

¹ It may be necessary to alter the environment so that the physically handicapped child is able to access and act on the objects surrounding him/her.

Reference

Halliday, M. Learning How To Mean Elsevier North-Holland Inc., New York, 1975.

6 $\overset{\times}{\perp}$ $\overset{\circ}{\Delta}$ >1 $\triangleleft \pi_{\textcircled{B}}$
 Six People Went To (the) Animal Farm

$\textcircled{V}F + \textcircled{R}SP + \textcircled{R}AH + \perp \uparrow \square B$

Vicki Fullarton and Scott Patten and Adrian Hendersen and Teacher Brodersen

$+ \textcircled{A}K + \textcircled{A}JB \overset{\circ}{\Delta} >1 \triangleleft \pi_{\textcircled{B}} \overset{\times}{\perp} 1 \textcircled{\times \times \times}$.

and Allan Kincade and Jim Burns went to (the) Animal Farm. We drove by van.
 (bus)

$\overset{\vee}{1} \pi \overset{\times}{\perp} 1 \textcircled{\circ} \overset{\vee}{I}! \textcircled{\circ} \text{---} \pi H. \overset{\times}{\perp} 1 \textcircled{\circ} \uparrow \textcircled{\circ} \pi H$

(The)first animal we saw (was a) huge brown horse. We fed (the) horse

$\overset{\times}{\sigma} A. \pi H \textcircled{\circ} \overset{\circ}{\sigma} A \textcircled{>} \textcircled{R}VF \downarrow. \pi H \textcircled{\circ} \overset{\circ}{\sigma} A$

apples. (The) horse ate (an) apple from Vicki(s) hand. (The) horse ate (an) apple

$\textcircled{>} \textcircled{R}AH \downarrow. \pi H \textcircled{\circ} \overset{\circ}{\sigma} A + \textcircled{R}SP \downarrow !$

from Adrian(s) hand. (The) horse ate (an) apple and Scott(s) hand!

$\textcircled{A}3 \textcircled{1} \heartsuit \sim \textcircled{R}SP \downarrow + \textcircled{A}3 \heartsuit \downarrow (?) \textcircled{R}SP.$

He didn't hurt Scott(s) hand but he frightened Scott.

$\overset{\times}{\perp} 1 \textcircled{\circ} \pi Sk. \pi Sk \textcircled{\circ} \overset{\vee}{\circ} \heartsuit \uparrow + \overset{\times}{\perp} 3 \angle \overset{\vee}{\heartsuit} -!$

We saw skunks. (The) skunks looked good but they smelled bad.
 (pretty)

$\overset{\times}{\perp} 1 \textcircled{\circ} \pi Sq + \overset{\times}{\perp} 1 \textcircled{\circ} \uparrow \textcircled{\circ} \pi Sq.$

We saw squirrels and we fed (the) squirrels.

$\perp \uparrow \square B + \textcircled{R}AH + \textcircled{A}JB \overset{\circ}{\Delta} \times \rightarrow | \cdot \pi R.$

Teacher Brodersen and Adrian and Mr. Burns ran after (a) rabbit.

$\overset{x}{\perp}3 \quad \overset{)}{1} \uparrow \uparrow \quad \wedge 3. \quad \textcircled{v}f + \textcircled{s}p \quad \overset{)}{\heartsuit} \uparrow \circ.$

They didn't get him. Vicki and Scott laughed.

$\overset{x}{\perp}1 \quad \overset{)}{\circ} \quad \overset{x}{\text{M}}G. \quad \overset{x}{\perp}1 \quad \overset{\textcircled{}}{\uparrow} \overset{\textcircled{}}{\circ} \quad \overset{x}{\text{M}}G \quad \overset{x}{\sigma} A. \quad \overset{x}{\text{M}}G \quad \overset{\wedge}{\pm}$

We saw goats.

We fed (the) goats apples.

Goats have

$\square \overset{x}{\perp} \quad \overset{x}{\text{M}}G \quad \overset{\wedge}{\pm} \quad \overset{x}{!} \overset{*}{\textcircled{\uparrow}}. \quad \overset{x}{\perp}1 \quad \overset{)}{\circ} \quad \overset{x}{\chi} D. \quad \overset{x}{\perp}1 \quad \overset{\textcircled{}}{\uparrow} \overset{\textcircled{}}{\circ}$

beards and goats have horns. We saw ducks. We fed (the) ducks. We fed

$\overset{x}{\chi} D \quad \rightarrow \quad \overset{*}{\text{fence}}.$

(the) ducks through (the) fence.

$\overset{x}{\perp}1 \quad \overset{)}{\text{bussed}} \quad > | \quad \triangle \uparrow \square. \quad \overset{x}{\perp}1 \quad \overset{)}{\circ} d \quad \vee \quad \overset{x}{\perp}1 + \quad \overset{)}{\text{drive}}.$

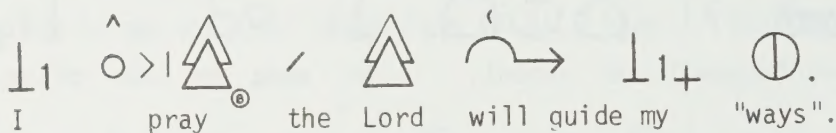
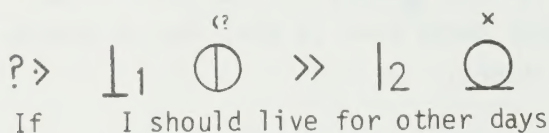
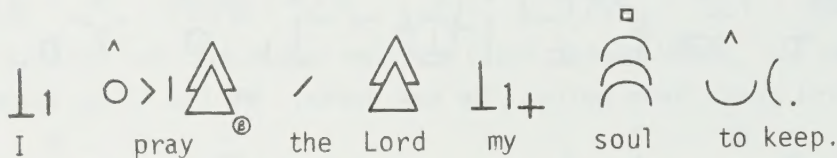
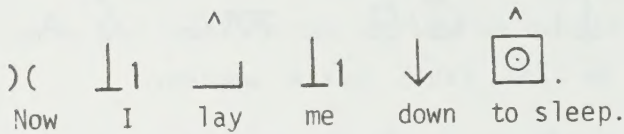
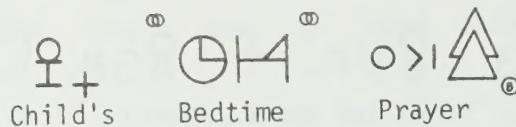
We drove (bussed) to school.

We sang on our drive.

by: Scott Patten, age 8
Vicki Fullarton, age 10
Saint John, N.B.

*

These are not standard BCI Blissymbols.



(submitted by Villa Hospital)

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